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ABSTRACT

The national Swedish Board of Universities and Colleges has initiated a program for the followup and evaluation of the higher education reform in Sweden. The program currently consists of six projects, with an additional three in the planning stage. They cover all of the problem areas given high priority by the national government: the organization of higher education; program funding and planning; activity evaluation; form and content of higher education; and the social effects of the reform, especially with regard to admission, nontraditional applicants, and male-female equality. The programs and their interrelationships are described and diagramed. (Author/MSE)

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THE UHÄ PROGRAMME FOR THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE REFORM OF HIGHER EDUCATION - CURRENT STATUS

Current and planned projects

The National Swedish Board of Universities and Colleges (UHÄ) has initiated a programme for the follow-up and evaluation of the higher education reform in Sweden. The programme currently consists of six projects, with an additional three projects in the planning stage. Taken together these projects cover all of the problem areas which have been given high priority by the national government, the parliament and UHÄ, namely:

1. The organization of higher education
2. Funding and planning of programmes
3. Activity evaluation
4. Form and content of higher education
5. The social effects of the reform of higher education, especially in regards to rules of admission, students admitted on the basis of non-traditional criteria, and equality between men and women.

On the following page there is a diagram which gives a general view of the partially complicated relationships between the programmes problem areas and its projects. The following is a short description of the projects.

1 The organization of higher education

In this problem area a special advisory group has been appointed to draw up guidelines for the evaluation of the higher education organization from the regional level down to the departmental level. The project started by making an inventory of problems. Lund/Malmö, Gothenburg, Stockholm and Umeå regions were chosen for the research. A research group in each region has been organized and meet regularly to plan and co-ordinate activities under the leadership of the project director (Rolf Lundin, associate professor in

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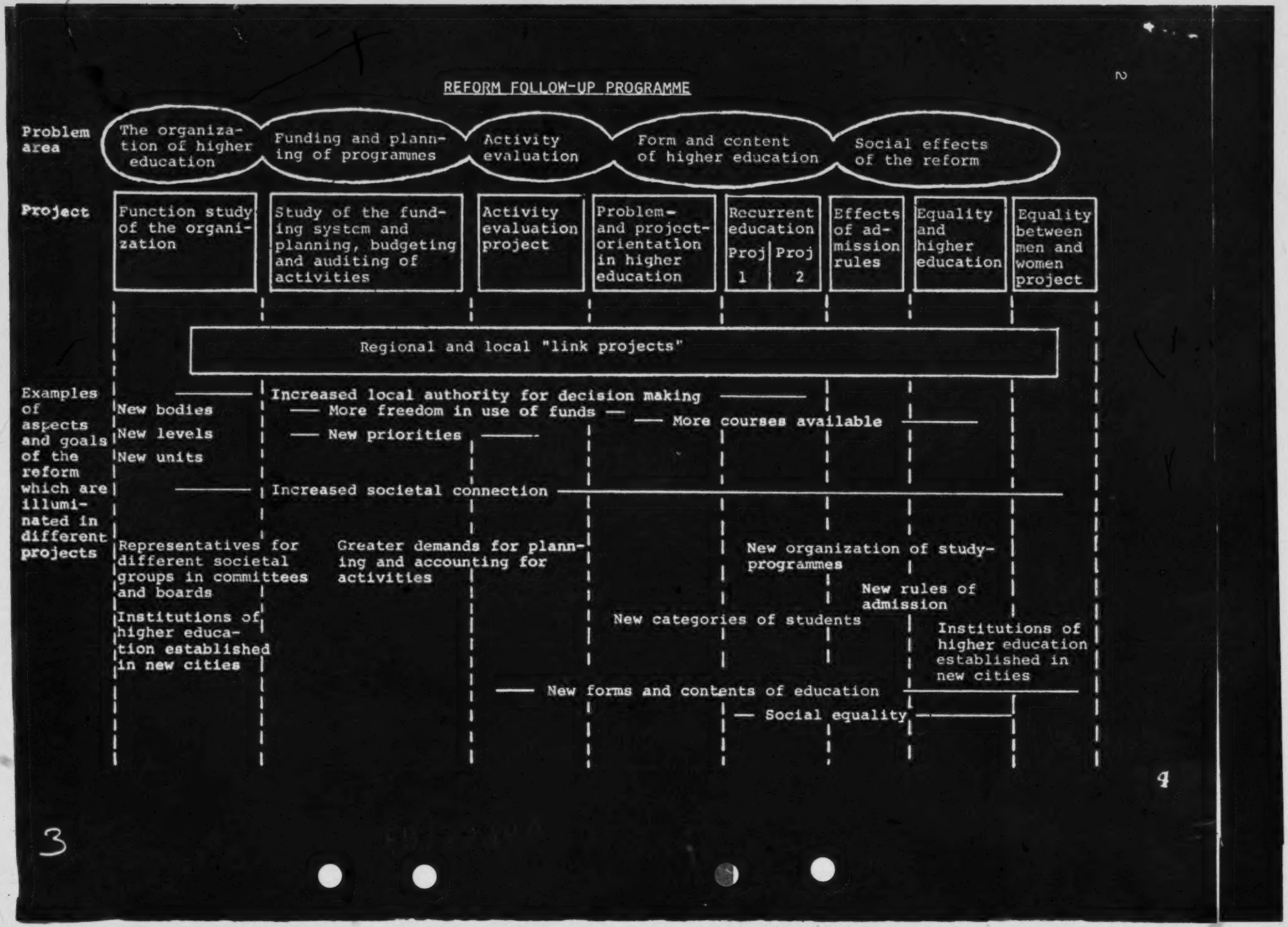
REFORM FOLLOW-UP PROGRAMME
Problem area
The organization of higher education
Funding and planning of programmes
Activity evaluation
Form and content of higher education
Social effects of the reform
Project
Function study of the organization
Study of the funding system and planning, budgeting and auditing of activities
Activity evaluation project
Problem- and project-orientation in higher education
Recurrent education
Proj 1
Proj 2
Effects of admission rules
Equality and higher education
Equality between men and women project
Regional and local "link projects"
Examples of aspects and goals of the reform which are illuminated in different projects
New bodies
New levels
New units
Increased local authority for decision making
More freedom in use of funds
New priorities
More courses available
Increased societal connection
Representatives for different societal groups in committees and boards
Greater demands for planning and accounting for activities
New organization of study-programmes
New rules of admission
New categories of students
Institutions of higher education established in new cities
Institutions of higher education established in new cities
New forms and contents of education
Social equality

Business Economics at the University of Gothenburg). The research groups consist of people from the fields of business economics, sociology, and political science. During the spring of 1978 the results of the inventory of problems will be presented, and a decision will be made as to which suggestions will be given priority during the coming year.

A sub-project, a study of how decisions at the central level are executed within universities and colleges, has been completed this year (projekt director: Bachelor of Economics Monica Lindstedt-Axhamre, Stockholm School of Business Administration and Economics). The project investigated what considerations were taken in the different boards and committees when making major decisions concerning general study programmes and how departments attempted to realize these programmes. Three study programmes were studied: behavioural sciences, public administration, and administrative systems work. This sub-projekt's final report will be published in May of this year.

2 Funding and planning of programmes

UHÄ has been instructed to analyze funding in higher education, more specifically how the boards and committees on different levels plan, budget and audit their activities.

A project to this effect is being planned. It will begin with a preliminary study aimed at investigating some basic problems such as the different roles played by the various units on different levels of the organization, problems which result from the structure of the budget system and relationships between central directives and local conditions.

3 Activity evaluation in higher education

This project (project director: Bertil Östergren, UHÄ) implies a different kind of follow-up of the reform. The main goal of the project is to contribute to increased effectiveness and better ability to innovate in higher education by contributing to quantitative and qualitative development of critical analysis as an integral part of the planning process. The project will not primarily be concerned with publishing reports with recommendations and suggestions. The intention is instead to start processes which will stimulate activity evaluation on all levels in higher education. Conferenses, courses and other types of contacts with those working in higher education are important aspects of the project. Among other things, during this and the next budget year, four day courses in activity evaluation will be held for each higher education region with participants from all levels from department to regional and central levels.

Two important facts are basic to the project: One is the decentralization of authority which was a result of the reform and which must be utilized properly through critical analysis of activities and an openness for change and redistribution.

The second is the reduction of resource increments to higher education which means that new activities imply redistribution of funds and phasing out of outmoded activity.

Activity evaluation also implies experiment, since one must sometimes make practical tests before one can make changes. The project will include some special studies and pilot-projects. Two special projects have been started, so far. One is a pre-study to a project on administrative auditing of a university department, the other on prerequisites for the development of cost analysis data in the area of higher education. Some help will also be given to local experiments with activity evaluation. Foreign efforts in the field are also being followed with great interest.

There is also a sub-project dealing with UHÄ:s own self-evaluation. A special group has been established within UHÄ to try to stimulate critical self-analysis and rethinking now that the organization is changing roles and duties.

For the planning of the project´s future activities a reference group with representatives for the different levels and fields of activities in the area of higher education, will be established.

4 Form and content of higher education

Project on problem- and project-orientation in higher education

The first project which was started within the evaluation programme concerns problem- and project-orientated education, an often named means for achieving such difficult goals as critical thinking, education with relevance to the society we live in, and personal development. Project director Kjell Askeland, Lillehammar, Norway has worked on the project for a year and a half in close cooperation with UHÄ:s R&D unit. Their activities have primarily been directed towards the different departments within universities and colleges which have been experimenting in this field. The first year´s activity was based on a series of seminars led by Kjell Askeland with participation of teachers and researchers from the whole country interested in and working with the development of problem- and project-orientation. The goal of the seminars was to critically assess the ways and means of successfully using these methods in education. The results of the participants´efforts both in their teaching and in the seminars will be published in a series of reports during this year. General problems as well as problems specific to certain courses will be taken up.

Two projects on recurrent education

Recurrent education (re), one of the major principles of the higher education reform, has major effects not only on institutions of higher education but also on the labor market and the individual. Projects dealing with re span over a wide

area of problems. Within the evaluation programme there are two projects studying different aspects of re.

One project (project director: Urban Dahllöf, professor of education at the University of Uppsala) is basically concerned with secondary analysis of data from earlier research which in one way or other dealt with re. In this way we hope to develop theory to the point where we have a platform to stand on for continued research. The project is not limited to higher education and is being financed by UHÄ and SÖ (UHÄ:s equivalent for primary and secondary schools).

The second project is concerned with the adaption of higher education to re, that is how the courses offered, their content and their pedagogical design have been adapted to the new categories of students which the higher education reform is trying to reach. (Project director: Associate professor Kjell Rubenson and researcher Owe Nilsson, Stockholm School of Education.)

The initial stage of the project has been an analysis of prerequisites for re, that is how different factors stimulate or inhibit re. Since the educational system, the labor market and social politics all influence the development of re, it is important to ascertain how these different aspects are related to each other. The project will also try to ascertain which measures have been taken on different levels within the higher education system in regard to courses offered, their content, and information about the educational system. The evaluation will also include the education itself, that is what regard has been taken to the needs of the new categories of students when courses are designed. During the spring special areas of the educational system will be selected to be studied more intensively.

Coordination between the two re-projects and other projects concerning the social effects of the reform will be partially effected by a series of seminars where all groups participate. A special group has been initiated within UHÄ to promote re and to help to relate these two projects to other efforts on behalf of re within the higher education system.

5 Social effects of the reform

An investigation of the more farreaching social effects of the reform requires a longitudinal study over a long period of time. The programme for the follow-up of the reform is primarily concerned with studies which can lead to measures which can be taken relatively quickly to promote the recruitment of new categories of students and social equality.

Follow-up of the new rules of admission to higher education

This project started in the spring of 1977 (project director: Lillemor Kim, UHÄ). The primary goal of the project is to study which effects the new admission requirements have on the recruitment of students.

A thorough preparatory study of the background of the establishment of the new admission requirements and guidelines for the evaluation in relation to cited goals for the new rules, have been reported in two papers. A third paper based on the results of the first attempt to apply the new rules of admission has also been published.

It is, of course, too early to draw conclusions as to social effects, effects on the labor market, and effects on the educational system, as we only have data for students accepted on the basis of the new rules for one semester. An important aspect to be studied is what mechanisms tend to eliminate some of the new students from the system. By cross-tabulating results from the National Bureau of Statistics with the material collected by the UHÄ group responsible for choosing which applicants are to be accepted to the different schools and study programmes, we should be able to ascertain some important facts as to what happens to those who are not accepted to the educational programme of their choice. This question, as well as a thorough analysis of the functions of the current criteria for choosing students, will be discussed in forthcoming reports.

A summary of the results of the experiment with accepting students who are at least 25 years old and who have at least five years of work experience (25:5 ers) to certain study programs within the schools of liberal arts has never been done. Since the results of such a study should give interesting information on some of the new categories of students the project will do this study in collaboration with the National Bureau of Statistics.

Changing the rules of admission for higher education is a necessary but hardly a sufficient measure to widen recruitment. One is immediately confronted with the questions for how well the education offered is adapted to the needs and total life situation of the new categories of students. Also the question of equality between men and women can be discussed in this light. In these questions there is a close collaboration between this project and the two re-projects. In the future this collaboration will also include the two other projects, one on equality in general and the other on equality between the sexes. These are described below.

Equality and higher education

In a report entitled "Equality and higher education" it is noted that:

> "There is well-documented knowledge of the fact that society today is far from the point of equality between different groups when it comes to getting a long theoretical education - there are vast differences between different social groups, between different regions of the country, and between men and women. On the other hand we know a lot less as to the reasons why we have this unjust situation."

Allan Svensson, professor of education at the University of Gothenburg, and author of the report quoted above, has been able to follow up a representative sample of individuals born 1948 and 1953 and analyze factors which are of importance for post-secondary school education. This study is an important source for comparison with data on potential changes due to the reform of higher education. Unfortunately there are no comparable statistics for people born in later years.

In order to get at least some comparable information for those who are now at the age for higher education, Allan Svensson will do a secondary analysis of data available at the National Bureau of Statistics.

Project on equality between men and women

In addition to the illumination of the problems of equality between men and women which will result from the aforementioned projects, a special project aimed at just these problems is also being planned. UHÄ:s group for research on equality has discussed what direction this project should take so as to best supplement other projects in the field, and has decided to study equality in post-graduate education and research.

Recruitment to post-graduate education is, however, a problem of wider scope. The planning of the equality project should be done within the framework of more far-reaching questions. UHÄ:s study of equality between the sexes will therefore be done in collaboration with The National Research Councils, which are planning a study of recruitment to research.

Evaluation of the higher education reform in its entirety

Government bill 1977/78:100, appendix 12, page 371, speaks of the necessity of

> "Evaluation of the means by which the reform is put into practice, both on the whole and within each sub-area ... the higher education reform is a complex societal reform in the sense that it spans over several sub-areas in which the suggested or taken changes are expected to collaborate with changes in other areas. One example is the relationship between the new student groups and the content and form of the courses offered; another is that recruitment to the different decision-making bodies has been expanded to new categories of people at the same time as the authority of decision in many matters has been decentralized to these bodies ... It is therefore important that the reform is also evaluated from a holistic perspective."

The projects described above evaluate certain points in a number of problem areas which have been given high priority. Each of these projects covers a sufficiently large and complex sub-area so as to necessitate the analysis of the effects of several aspects of the reform at the same time. Both of the

examples named in the quote above are covered in the projects described above (re and the organization of higher education). There is also a great deal of collaboration between several of the projects, partially to avoid unnecessary overlap but also to try to achieve a more holistic evaluation.

Even if the programme for the follow-up of the reform cannot aim at a complete evaluation of the entire reform, one can, of course, strive to develop a more holistic perspective during the life of the programme. In the following some examples of possible ways to further increase the possibility of discovering and illuminating complex causal relationships are given.

Link-projects

From the very start the planning group for the follow-up programme was aware that it would be necessary to supplement the projects which covered specific areas with horizontal studies which would link these problems together. Urban Dahllöf presented an outline to a regional study which would attempt to link different aspects of the reform within one sector. According to Dahllöf's suggestion such a project will start with investigating the new organization's way of functioning, its effects on recruitment of new categories of students, and the adaptation of routines to the new students, their progress at the university and possibly their path out into the labor market, all fit together. A pilot study was initiated during the spring of 1977 but several problems have prevented a full scale project from being realized at this time. Discussions as to the functions of a central reform evaluation programme have led to the conclusion that a project of this type should be initiated and carried out on the local level. The current plan is for the central follow-up programme to attempt to stimulate and support a regional or local "link-project".

Program evaluation in a holistic perspective

The reform evaluation programme has always been considered a supplement to the evaluations which are expected at all levels within higher education for their area of responsibility. For instance, departments, program boards and universities are all expected to follow-up their educational programmes. The evaluation of three educational programmes which is described above is not primarily directed towards a study of the programmes themselves, but rather towards the ways the different organizations function when they attempt to realize centrally made decisions. At some future date, the follow-up programme may do a study of the different programmes from a holistic perspective.

Data bank for the longitudinal evaluation of students in higher education

Previous higher education reforms have been evaluated primarily by analyzing statistical data on the students. However, such data are seldom sufficient and must be supplemented with other types of information. Several of the projects in the reform evaluation programme will have to follow-up different groups of students. The need for a common data bank has been discussed.

The data bank could be used by both the different projects and for a general description of students' paths into and through higher education.

Who stear the reform evaluation programme?

The group responsible for decision making for the follow-up programme sees as its primary duty at this stage to coordinate the entire programme, integrate it in the normal activities of all levels within the system of higher education, and to see to it that the results are used in the best possible way. The group consists of all of the project directors and a representative for each of the units at UHÄ.

The group is not intended to be representative for all the interest groups connected with the reform evaluation programme. Representativeness is achieved primarily by UHÄ:s planning board for research and development, which is an advisory group for the entire R&D programme. Some of the projects also have their own advisory groups, where several interest groups are represented (i.e. the organization project and the activity evaluation project). Other projects make use of already existing advisory groups. For instance the admissions project consults with UHÄ:s board of admissions, the equality project with UHÄ:s group for research on equality, the re project with UHÄ:s group for re. The follow-up programme is also presented and discussed at courses and conferences.

Marianne Bauer

1978-04-21

Newsletters and reports from the reform evaluation programme

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Verksamhetsvärdering i högskolan, FoU för högskolan, 1978:2 (Östergren).

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